

# How to Protect Yourself and Your Family From the Sun

Ultraviolet (UV) light can be harmful to your skin. In fact, most skin cancers are caused by being exposed to too much UV light. UV light mainly comes from the sun. But it can also come from tanning beds and sun lamps. There are things you can do to help limit how much UV light you and your family are exposed to.



## Stay in the shade.

Staying in the shade is one of the best ways to help limit UV exposure. Try to stay out of direct sunlight between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., when UV light is strongest. This is true any time of year as UV rays reach the ground no matter the season!

Tip: Use the shadow test to see how strong the sun's rays are. If your shadow is shorter than you are, the sun's rays are the strongest.



## Wear clothes to cover your skin.

Long-sleeve shirts, long pants, or long skirts cover the most skin and are the most protective. Some clothing is made with UV protection.

Children need special attention in the sun. They tend to spend more time outdoors and burn more easily. Babies younger than 6 months old should be kept out of direct sunlight. They should also wear hats and protective clothing. Check with your baby's doctor before using sunscreen as some experts don't think that sunscreen should be used on infants.



## Use sunscreen and apply it correctly.

Sunscreen can help protect your skin from the sun's UV rays. Use products with broad-spectrum protection (against both UVA and UVB rays). And choose a sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 30 or higher.

Be sure to check the expiration date. Sunscreen is usually good for 2 to 3 years. And don't forget to protect your lips by using a lip balm with sunscreen.

Apply enough sunscreen to fully cover your arms, legs, neck, and face. Any other areas that are exposed to the sun should have sunscreen applied as well.

Sunscreen needs to be put on at least every 2 hours, but check the label to be sure. Sunscreen can wash off when you sweat or swim and wipe off with a towel. So, sunscreen may need to be reapplied more often, even if it is "water resistant."

Remember that sunscreen is just a filter. It does not block all UV rays. Use it along with other steps to protect yourself.



### Wear a wide brim hat.

Be sure that your hat protects your eyes, forehead, nose, scalp, and ears. A hat with a 2- or 3-inch brim all around is best.



### Wear sunglasses that block both UVA and UVB rays.

Large-framed and wraparound sunglasses that block at least 99% of UVA and UVB rays protect best. Children need smaller versions of protective adult sunglasses. Do not use toy sunglasses.



### Avoid tanning beds, booths, and sun lamps.

Tanning devices can cause long-term skin damage and increase your risk of skin cancer.

Even with sunscreen, you should limit the amount of time you spend in the sun. Sunscreen does not block all UV rays.



For more information and answers, visit the American Cancer Society website at [cancer.org/sunsafety](https://cancer.org/sunsafety) or call us at **1-800-227-2345**. We're here when you need us.

